

The Mahayana Path of Preparation & Buddha Nature

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BUDDHA NATURE

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Perfection of Wisdom Studies

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BUDDHA NATURE

The next topic of Maitreya's **Ornament** is Buddha Nature. It is the fourth of the ten topics of the **Ornaments'** first chapter.

The Buddhist scriptures mention various terms connoting Buddha Nature:

- Sanskrit: *sugatagarbha* / Tibetan: *bde gshegs snying po* / English: Essence of the One Gone to Bliss
- Sanskrit: *tathagatagarbha* / Tibetan: *de gshegs snying po* / English: Essence of the One Thus Gone
- Sanskrit: *gotra* / Tibetan: *rigs* / English: affinity, lineage, family, class, type, species, status, nature, potential, etc.
- Sanskrit: *dhatu* / Tibetan: *khams* / English: element, constituent,

The term that is used in the **Ornament** is *rigs* or *sangs rgyas kyi rigs*, with *sangs rgyas* meaning Buddha. The English term that is commonly used to translate *sangs rgyas kyi rigs* is Buddha Nature.

In general, Buddha Nature refers to that which every sentient being possesses and which enables sentient beings to become Buddhas. However, it is explained differently in various scriptures, in particular across the different philosophical tenet systems.

According to the **Perfection of Wisdom Sutras**, there are two types of Buddha Nature:

- 1) Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature (Tib.: *rang bzhin gnas rigs*)
- 2) Evolving Buddha Nature (Tib.: *rgyas 'gyur gyi rigs*)

Of the two, Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is described as the principal Buddha Nature. It refers to the emptiness of a sentient being's mental consciousness; it is the main factor facilitating the development and transformation of the mind, for if the mind did not lack true/inherent existence, a sentient being's mental consciousness could not change; it could not gradually be freed from afflictive and cognitive obstructions and thus become the enlightened mind of a Buddha.

Furthermore, Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is explained to be 'suitable to become the *Dharmakaya* (Truth Body) of a Buddha'. Here, the *Dharmakaya* of a Buddha - which the Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is suitable to become - refers to the *Nature Body of Natural Purity*, i.e. the emptiness of the omniscient mental consciousness of a Buddha. Therefore, the emptiness of a sentient being's mental consciousness will become the emptiness of his mental consciousness as a Buddha. In other words, when the sentient being attains Buddhahood, the emptiness of his formerly obstructed mental consciousness becomes the emptiness of his now non-obstructed and omniscient mental consciousness.

Evolving Buddha Nature refers to either (1) a sentient being's mental consciousness itself or (2) the *potential* of that mental consciousness to remove obstructions and achieve the realizations of a Buddha. The mental consciousness also serves as the basis of the Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature (the mental consciousness' emptiness). Furthermore, the mental consciousness is suitable to become the *Jnanakaya* (Wisdom Body), while the potential of the mental consciousness (i.e. the potential to remove obstructions and achieve the realizations of a Buddha) is suitable to become the *Rupakaya* (Form Body) of a Buddha. This means that in the future, when the sentient being becomes a Buddha, the continuum of his mental consciousness will become the mental consciousness (the *Jnanakaya*) of his future Buddha while the continuum of the potential will become the *Rupa Kaya*.

Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature and Evolving Buddha Nature are explained in more detail below.

Buddha Nature can also be categorized into thirteen different types, which are also explained below.

Panchen Sonam Drakpa starts his presentation of Buddha Nature in the **General Meaning** with an introduction explaining why the description of the Mahayana path of preparation is followed by the description of Buddha Nature:

Having set out the Mahayana practice instructions and the Mahayana path of preparation, Maitreya explains the proper way to engage in the practice of the ten topics of the Mahayana practice instructions. That explanation is preceded by a presentation of Buddha Nature, so that a practitioner who has

awakened his Buddha Nature will generate the Mahayana path of preparation, the Mahayana path of seeing, and so forth. In addition, when a practice-awareness arisen from meditation and focusing on emptiness (newly attained on the Mahayana path of preparation) takes to mind Buddha Nature, the capacity of that mind is enhanced, which is another reason why Buddha Nature is presented here.

- Someone objects to that sequence by saying that it is better to set forth the topic of Buddha Nature *before* presenting the first topic of the first chapter of the **Ornament**, Bodhicitta, because practitioners awaken their Buddha Nature before they newly generate Bodhicitta.

Our response is that there is no fault in the order in which Maitreya first presents Bodhicitta and then Buddha Nature. Even though the causal order of practice is that one first awakens one's Buddha Nature and then cultivates Bodhicitta, here the sequence of the two topics is intended to indicate that practitioners who have attained the Mahayana path of accumulation are able to realize that they possess Buddha Nature.

In general, awakening one's Buddha Nature refers to generating great compassion. Hence, practitioners who newly generate great compassion (the loving attitude that wishes for all sentient beings to be free from suffering) newly awaken their Buddha Nature. Furthermore, since practitioners have to develop great compassion before cultivating Bodhicitta, they also awaken their Buddha Nature before Bodhicitta.

Haribhadra says in his **Great Commentary** (Tib.: 'grel chen)

Since [the awakening of Buddha Nature] precedes Bodhicitta, the path of concordance with liberation (i.e. the path of accumulation), the path of concordance with definite discrimination (i.e. the path of preparation), and so forth, shouldn't Buddha Nature be presented first? Why is it presented in such a way? - [Our response is:] that is true - that is the actual sequence. But since here the cause is taught after having explained the result, it is the explanatory sequence.

Gyalsab je says in his **Ornament of the Essence**:

The meaning [of Haribhadra's quote from the **Great Commentary**] is [as follows]: Having first awakened Buddha Nature, after that one generates the mind [of enlightenment] - this is the sequence of cause and effect. When the generated mind [of enlightenment], the [path of] concordance with liberation, and so forth are generated in one's continuum, one will be able to realize the existence of Buddha Nature in one's continuum. Hence the explanation here is from the point of view of that sequence.

After Panchen Sonam Drakpa gives the reason why the presentation of the Mahayana path of preparation is followed by the presentation of Buddha Nature, he cites the following sutric passages that teach Buddha Nature:

Then the Venerable Subhuti thus asks the Victorious One, "what is the meaning of the term: 'the Bodhisattva, the great heroic being', which the Victorious One uses?"

In answer to Subhuti's question as to the meaning of the term 'Bodhisattva' that is cited frequently during topics such as 'Bodhicitta', and so forth, the Buddha replies:

Having thus been asked, the Victorious One explains thus to the Venerable Subhuti, "Subhuti, the meaning of the term 'Bodhisattva' is that it has no meaning. If one were to ask why? - [The reason is that] a Bodhisattva is not perceived to be born or to exist or to be non-existent. Subhuti, therefore, the meaning of the term 'Bodhisattva' is that it has no meaning."

This sutric passage briefly indicates the nature of Buddha Nature.

Subhuti, it is like this: for instance, one does not perceive the track of a bird in the sky...

and so forth. The latter is an excerpt from the sutric passage that sets forth the thirteen types of Buddha Nature.

The citation of the sutric passages is followed by the first line of the two verses of the **Ornament** that

describe Buddha Nature in general and the thirteen types of Buddha Nature, in particular:

The six qualities of realization...

and so forth.

The meaning of these two verses is explained below.

The **General Meaning** then proceeds to expound on Buddha Nature by setting forth four subtopics:

1. Buddha Nature according to the Vaibhashika and Sautrāntika School
2. Buddha Nature according to the Chittamatra School
3. The refutation of the Chittamatra School in Arya Vimuktisena's ***Illuminating the [Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in] Twenty-Thousand [Verses]*** (Skt. *Abhisamayalamkaravrtti*, Tib.: *nyi khri snang ba*)
4. Explanation of our own system, the Middle Way School

Buddha Nature according to the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika School:

The proponents of the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika School do not use the term 'Buddha Nature' but the term '*Arya Nature*'. The sutras that teach the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika tenets explain Arya Nature to have four aspects:

- i. Being satisfied with simple monastic robes
- ii. Being satisfied with simple dwellings
- iii. Being satisfied with simple alms
- iv. Taking great delight in eliminating [afflictions] and meditating

The first three aspects enable practitioners to temporarily overcome craving to their possessions and facilitate meditation on the path. The fourth aspect enables practitioners to engage in actual meditation and irreversibly eradicate craving to the self and one's possessions.

A person who possesses these four aspects possesses Arya Nature.

Vasubandhu says in his ***Treasury of Knowledge***:

Non-attachment - Arya nature.

Among them, three are the entity of satisfaction.

They present the way; the last, the action.

Because of being the antidotes to the production of craving,

They are for the sake of the temporary and utter pacification of

Desire for the phenomena conceived to be mine and I.

The reason the four aspects are called Arya Nature is that in dependence on the four, practitioners attain the state of an Arya.

Vasubandhu says in his ***Auto-Commentary on the Treasury of Knowledge*** (Tib.: *mdzod rang 'grel*):

If someone asks, 'why are they called Arya Nature?' - [Our response is:] since from those an Arya being is generated, there are four.

Lama Tsongkhapa says in his ***Golden Rosary*** that the difference between those of sharp and weak mental faculty can be explained from the point of view of Buddha Nature:

The difference between those of sharp and weak mental faculty can be posited from the point of view of Buddha Nature because [Vasubandhu says] in the ***Treasury of Knowledge***, "Some possess their nature from the start; some change through training."

However, unlike the proponents of the other philosophical tenet schools (the Chittamatra and Madhyamika), proponents of the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika schools do not assert a *Naturally Abiding* and *Evolving Nature*.

According to the ***Heart-Jewel that Delights Those of Clear Understanding*** (Tib.: *blo gsal dga' bskyed snying gi nor bu*) a popular Tibetan commentary on Panchen Sonam Drakpa's ***General Meaning*** and ***Decisive Analysis***, composed by the late Geshe Pema Gyaltsen, a contemporary master and former abbot of Drepung Loseling Monastery, there is a difference between the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika schools regarding their assertion of Arya Nature. Even though both generally set forth the four aspects of Arya Nature mentioned above, the proponents of the Sautrantika School also propound Arya Nature to refer to seeds based on the mental consciousness that have the potential to lead a person to the state of an Arya and liberation.

Geshe Pema Gyaltsen supports this claim by citing two quotes. The first quote is from a commentary on the Abhidharmakosha by one of Vasubandhu's disciples, called ***Jinaputra*** (Tib.: *rgyal sras ma*):

For the proponents of the Sautrantika, [Arya] Nature refers to the potential that is the seed on the mind. At the level of ordinary beings and learners, [Arya] Nature refers to the seed [that leads to the attainment of the five types of Arhats such as] 'those who bear the feature of degeneration'.

Please note that the five types of Arhats (those who bear the feature of degeneration, those who bear the feature of killing themselves, etc.) are not asserted by the proponents of the Chittamatra or Madhyamika. (Those five are explained in Handout 52 on the *Twenty Sangha*.)

The second quote is from Khedrup Je's commentary [on Haribhadra's ***Commentary Clarifying the Meaning***] called ***Illuminating Difficult Realizations*** (Tib.: *rtogs dka'i snang ba*):

[The proponents of the Sautrantika] accept [Arya] Nature to refer to the potential that generates Arya Dharma and is based on the mental consciousness.

Buddha Nature according to the Chittamatra School:

The ***Abhidharma Sutra*** says:

Buddha Nature of Bodhisattvas is that which (1) has existed without obstruction since beginningless time, (2) is obtained by dharmata, and (3) is the distinctive feature of the six sense sources.

(The meaning of this quote is explained below.)

The proponents of the Chittamatra School assert that Buddha Nature can be categorized into:

- a. Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature
- b. Evolving Buddha Nature

According to the Chittamatra School, Buddha Nature refers to the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom. Here, the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom constitutes the potential in a sentient being's continuum that enables him to cultivate uncontaminated exalted wisdom and become an Arya. Such uncontaminated exalted wisdom is essential to progress on the path, for it serves as the direct antidote to afflictive and cognitive obstructions.

Of the two types of Buddha Nature, *Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature* represents the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom that has not yet been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Buddha Dharma, whereas *Evolving Buddha Nature* refers to the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom that has been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Buddha Dharma.

Furthermore, Buddha Nature (both *Naturally Abiding* and *Evolving Buddha Nature*) possesses the three characteristics mentioned in the quote of the ***Abhidharma Sutra*** cited above:

1. It has existed since beginningless time
2. It is obtained by dharmata
3. It is the distinctive feature of the six sense sources

(1) *It has existed since beginningless time*

Buddha Nature has existed since beginningless time, for there has never been a time when its previous continuum did not exist in the form of the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom. This is true for both the Naturally Abiding and the Evolving Nature. Even though Evolving Buddha Nature comes into existence only subsequent to Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, its continuum has nonetheless existed since beginningless time in the form of the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom.

(2) *It is obtained by dharmata*

It is obtained by dharmata because it arose naturally and was not posited by an awareness. In general, a mental seed that is *not* Buddha Nature was posited by a consciousness. For instance, a seed of anger or a karmic seed were both posited on the mental consciousness by an awareness (the seed of anger was posited by anger itself). However, the continuums of both Naturally Abiding and Evolving Nature have existed in the form of the seeds of uncontaminated exalted wisdom since beginningless time and were therefore not left by a consciousness. Please note that here dharmata does not mean 'emptiness' but nature, reality, actuality, etc.

(3) *It is the distinctive feature of the six sense sources*

In general the six sense sources can be categorized into the six external sense sources and the six internal sense sources. The six external sense sources are:

1. Visual forms (i.e. shapes and colors)
2. Sounds
3. Odors
4. Tastes
5. Tangible objects
6. Phenomena

The first five external sense sources constitute the principal objects of the five sense consciousnesses and the sixth, phenomena, is the principal object of the mental consciousness.

The six internal sense sources are:

1. The eye sense source
2. The ear sense source
3. The nose sense source
4. The tongue sense source
5. The body sense source
6. The phenomena sense source

The first five sense sources refer to the five sense powers, i.e. the subtle physical forms that serve as the uncommon empowering conditions of their respective sense consciousnesses and thus enable these sense awarenesses to perceive their respective sense objects. For instance, the eye sense source is the subtle physical form that serves as the uncommon empowering condition of the eye consciousness and enables the eye consciousness to perceive visual objects (shapes and colors). The sixth sense source, the phenomena sense source, refers to mental consciousness itself - or more precisely - to the mental consciousness that is the uncommon empowering condition of its next moment of mental consciousness and enables that next moment of mental consciousness to apprehend a phenomenon.

Regarding the third characteristic of Buddha Nature, *it being the distinctive feature of the six sense sources*, this refers to Buddha Nature being the distinctive feature of the six *internal* sense sources. There are different explanations of the meaning of this characteristic.

According to Lama Tsongkhapa's ***Commentary on the Difficult Points of the Mind-basis-of-all*** (Tib.: ***kun gzhi'i dka' 'grel***), the third characteristic refers to the fact that the six sense-sources in the continuum of someone who has Buddha Nature are more distinguished than the six sense-sources of someone who does not possess such Buddha Nature. Please note that this explanation is from the point of view of the Chittamatra School Following Scripture, the proponents of which assert that

there are sentient beings who do not possess Buddha Nature (whereas the proponents of the Chittamatra School Following Reasoning assert that all sentient beings possess Buddha Nature).

The *Commentary on the Difficult Points of the Mind-basis-of-all* (Tib.: *kun gzhi'i dka' 'grel*) says: Why is it described as 'being the distinctive feature of the six sense sources'? Because in whoever's continuum it is found, it makes their six sense sources more distinguished than [the six sense sources of] others [who do not possess Buddha Nature].

However, Lama Tsongkhapa gives a different explanation in his *Golden Rosary*. This explanation is summarized by Geshe Pema Gyaltsen in his *Heart-Jewel that Delights those of Clear Understanding* (Tib.: *blo gsal dga' bskyed snying gi nor bu*), where he says that Buddha Nature is the distinctive feature of the six sense sources because it constitutes the potential that makes it possible to free the six sense sources from the defilements (i.e. afflictive and cognitive obstructions).

In general, proponents of the Chittamatra can be categorized into (1) Followers of Scripture who assert the existence of a mind-basis-of-all and (2) Followers of Reasoning who do not assert the existence of a mind-basis-of-all.

With regard to these two types of followers of the Chittamatra School, Panchen Sonam Drakpa says that proponents of the Chittamatra School who assert the existence of a mind-basis-of-all explain Buddha Nature - i.e. the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom - to be based on the mind-basis-of-all. Furthermore, of the two types of Buddha Nature, they hold that the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom that has not been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma refers to Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, and the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom that has been nourished by listening contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma is Evolving Buddha Nature.

Proponents of the Chittamatra School who do not accept the existence of a mind-basis-of-all assert the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom that is based on the mental consciousness to be Buddha Nature. Of the two types of Buddha Nature, they explain Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature to refer to the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom that holds the potential to generate the realizations of one of the three vehicles (Hearer, Solitary Realizer, or Bodhisattva vehicle) when the appropriate conditions arise. When the appropriate conditions arise, the Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature becomes the Evolving Buddha Nature. In other words, the proponents of the Chittamatra School who do not accept the existence of a mind-basis-of-all explain Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature and Evolving Buddha Nature in the same way as the proponents of Chittamatra who accept the existence of a mind-basis-of-all. The only difference is that the former describe the mind on which the two types of nature are based to be the mental consciousness and not the mind-basis-of-all. Therefore, they explain Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature to refer to the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom that has not been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Buddha Dharma, and Evolving Buddha Nature to refer to the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom that has been nourished by those three.

Gyaltsab je says in his Ornament of the Essence:

[Buddha says in the *Abhidharma Sutra*: "Buddha Nature of Bodhisattvas is that which (1) has existed without obstruction since beginningless time, (2) is obtained by dharmata, and (3) is the distinguishing feature of the six sense sources." According to the proponents of the Chittamatra, interpreting the meaning of this passage, if a mind-basis-of-all is posited, [Buddha Nature refers to] the potential that is capable of generating the realizations of any of the three vehicles when the uncontaminated seed that exists [based] on the internal six sense sources encounters the condition [of listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma]. When the mind-basis-of-all is posited, if the uncontaminated seed existing [based] on the mind-basis-of-all has not been nourished by the condition [of listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma] it is called 'Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature'; if it has been nourished by the condition of listening [contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma] and becomes special, it is called 'Evolving Buddha Nature'.

Asanga says in his **Bodhisattva Bhumi** (Tib.: **byang sa**)

If someone asks, what is Buddha Nature? - [Our response is:] in brief, there are two [types] - naturally abiding and correct accomplishment (i.e. Evolving Buddha Nature). Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature refers to the distinctive feature of Bodhisattvas' six sense sources. It continues from one [moment] to the next since beginningless time and is obtained by dharmata.

Correct Accomplishment Buddha Nature refers to that which is achieved by having previously accustomed oneself to root virtue.

Asanga also says in his **Shravaka Bhumi** (Tib.: **nyan sa**):

The seeds that do not produce results and do not establish results are said to be subtler. At the time when they produce results and establish results, the seeds and the results become one. Therefore, [at that time] Buddha Nature is taught to be coarse.

When pondering these quotes it seems that one needs to say that according to the Chittamatra School, since Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature and Evolving Buddha Nature are contradictory, there is no longer any Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature in the continuum of Bodhisattvas who have entered the path of accumulation. Hence, Buddha Nature in the continuum of those Bodhisattvas is necessarily Evolving Buddha Nature.

In addition to Buddha Nature, the scriptures set forth three other types of nature: (1) Hearer Nature (Tib.: *nyan thos kyi rigs*), (2) Solitary Realizer Nature (Tib.: *rang rgyal gyi rigs*), and (3) Mahayana Nature (Tib.: *theg chen gyi rigs*), with Mahayana Nature being different from Buddha Nature (which is explained below).

Please note that the following explanation is not from the **General Meaning**, but it may be helpful to understand the remaining explanations on Buddha Nature provided in that text.

Hearer Nature

Hearer Nature refers to the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of a practitioner who has awakened Hearer Nature but not yet attained the state of a Hearer Arhat.

A practitioner who has awakened Hearer Nature is a practitioner who is highly determined to practice the Hearer path and become a Hearer Arhat. Upon receiving Hinayana teachings and inspiration through the example of Hearer practitioners or Hearer Arhats he experiences great joy and exhibits physical reactions such as his eyes filling with tears and his body hair standing on end.

Please note that unlike Buddha Nature, Hearer Nature cannot be categorized into (1) Naturally Abiding Hearer Nature and (2) Evolving Hearer Nature, because Hearer Nature is necessarily Evolving Nature. It is necessarily Evolving Nature because it refers to the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of a practitioner who has awakened Hearer Nature (but not yet attained the state of a Hearer Arhat), and whose seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom has thus been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on Hinayana teachings.

Also, Hearer Nature and Buddha Nature are not contradictory, for whatever is Hearer Nature is necessarily Evolving Buddha Nature. It is Evolving Buddha Nature because it is the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom that has been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma.

Gyaltsab je says in the **Ornament of the Essence**:

That which has been nourished only by listening to Hearer Dharma is called 'Hearer Nature'.

Solitary Realizer Nature

Solitary Realizer Nature refers to the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of a practitioner who has awakened Solitary Realizer Nature but not yet attained the state of a Solitary Realizer Arhat.

A practitioner who has awakened Solitary Realizer Nature is a practitioner who is highly determined to practice the Solitary Realizer path and become a Solitary Realizer Arhat. Upon receiving Hinayana teachings and inspiration through the example of Solitary Realizer practitioners or Solitary Realizer Arhats he experiences great joy and exhibits physical reactions such as his eyes filling with tears and his body hair standing on end.

Like Hearer Nature, Solitary Realizer Nature cannot be categorized into (1) Naturally Abiding Solitary Realizer Nature and (2) Evolving Solitary Realizer Nature, because whatever is Solitary Realizer Nature is necessarily Evolving Solitary Realizer Nature. It is necessarily Evolving Nature because it refers to the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of a practitioner who has awakened Solitary Realizer Nature (but not yet attained the state of a Solitary Realizer Arhat), and whose seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom has therefore been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on Hinayana teachings.

Moreover, Solitary Realizer Nature and Buddha Nature are not contradictory, for whatever is Solitary Realizer Nature is necessarily Evolving Buddha Nature.

Gyalsab je says in the ***Ornament of the Essence***:

That which has only been nourished by listening to Dharma of non-inherently existing objects of perception is called Solitary Realizer Nature.

Mahayana Nature

Mahayana Nature refers to the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of a practitioner who has awakened Mahayana Nature but not yet attained the state of a Mahayana Arhat, i.e. a Buddha.

A practitioner who has awakened Mahayana Nature constitutes a person who has cultivated great compassion, who is highly determined to practice the Mahayana path and become a Buddha, who is able to endure any type of hardship for the benefit of others, and who demonstrates intense diligence when engaging in the deeds of a Bodhisattva.

Maitreya says in his ***Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras*** (Skt.: *Mahayanasutralamkara*, Tib.: *mdo sde rgyan*):

*Before [engaging in] training, compassion and
Determination and endurance and
The proper deeds of virtue
Should be known as the signs of [having awakened Mahayana-]nature.*

"Before [engaging in] training" here means that practitioners awaken Mahayana Nature before they enter the Mahayana path. (This is also the case for practitioners of the Hearer and Solitary Realizer vehicle; those aspiring to Hearer and Solitary Realizer practices awaken Hearer Nature and Solitary Realizer Nature before they enter their respective paths.)

Like Hearer and Solitary Realizer Nature, Mahayana Nature cannot be categorized into (1) Naturally Abiding Mahayana Nature and (2) Evolving Mahayana Nature, for whatever is Mahayana Nature is necessarily Evolving Nature. It is necessarily Evolving Nature because it refers to the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of a practitioner who has awakened Mahayana Nature (but not yet attained the state of a Buddha), and whose seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom has therefore been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on Mahayana teachings.

Gyalsab je says in the ***Ornament of the Essence***:

That which has been nourished by listening to profound and extensive Dharma is called 'Mahayana Nature'.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, there is a difference between Mahayana Nature and Buddha Nature. Whatever is Mahayana Nature is necessarily Buddha Nature, but whatever is Buddha Nature is *not* necessarily Mahayana Nature. For instance, the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the

continuum of a person who is not interested in the Buddha Dharma is Buddha Nature (Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature) but not Mahayana Nature. It is not Mahayana Nature because it is not the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of a person who has awakened Mahayana Nature. Another example of Buddha Nature that is not Mahayana Nature is the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of a practitioner who has awakened Hearer Nature. The seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of a practitioner who has awakened Hearer Nature is Buddha Nature because it is Evolving Buddha Nature. However, it is not Mahayana Nature because it is not the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of a practitioner who has awakened Mahayana Nature.

With regard to the three types of nature (Hearer, Solitary Realizer, and Mahayana Nature), the scriptures also mention three types of sentient being:

- i. Someone who is endowed with Hearer Nature (Tib.: *nyan thos kyi rigs can*)
- ii. Someone who is endowed with Solitary Realizer Nature (Tib.: *rang rgyal gyi rigs can*)
- iii. Someone who is endowed with Mahayana Nature (Tib.: *theg chen gyi rigs can*)

Someone who is endowed with Hearer Nature refers to a sentient being who has awakened Hearer Nature, someone who is endowed with Solitary Realizer Nature to a sentient being who has awakened Solitary Realizer Nature, and someone who is endowed with Mahayana Nature to a sentient being who has awakened Mahayana Nature.

Furthermore, Panchen Sonam Drakpa says in his **General Meaning** that the proponents of the Chittamatra School Following Scripture assert the following three types of sentient being:

- a. A sentient being who is definite with regard to the nature of one of the three vehicles (Tib.: *theg pa gsum po so sor rigs nges pa'i sems can*)
- b. A sentient beings who is not definite with regard to the nature of one of the three vehicles (Tib.: *theg pa gsum gang du yang rigs ma nges pa'i sems can*)
- c. A sentient beings who lacks a nature, i.e. the potential to attain liberation or Buddhahood (Tib.: *rigs chad kyi sems can*)

Since, as mentioned above, the proponents of the Chittamatra School Following Reasoning assert that all sentient beings have Buddha Nature and will eventually attain Buddhahood, they only accept the first two types but not the third.

a. A sentient being who is definite with regard to the nature of one of the three vehicles

A sentient being who is definite with regard to the nature of one of the three vehicles can be further categorized into:

- I) Someone who is definite with regard to Hearer Nature (Tib.: *nyan thos kyi rigs nges*)
- II) Someone who is definite with regard to Solitary Realizer Nature (Tib.: *rang rgyal gyi rigs nges*)
- III) Someone who is definite with regard to Mahayana Nature (Tib.: *theg chen gyi rigs nges*)

'Someone who is definite with regard to Hearer Nature' refers to a person (1) who will definitely attain the state of a Hinayana Arhat and (2) who either has awakened Hearer Nature or will awaken Hearer Nature within his current lifetime.

'Someone who is definite with regard to Solitary Realizer Nature' refers to a person (1) who will definitely attain the state of a Solitary Realizer Arhat and (2) who either has awakened Solitary Realizer Nature or will awaken Solitary Realizer Nature within his current lifetime.

And 'someone who is definite with regard to Mahayana Nature' refers to a person (1) who will attain Buddhahood without losing Bodhicitta and entering the Hinayana path and (2) who either has awakened Mahayana Nature or will awaken Mahayana Nature in his current lifetime.

Gyaltsab je says in the **Ornament of the Essence**:

That which, by way of its own entity, is definite with regard to being the cause of the realizations of one of the three vehicles is called 'definite nature'.

b. A sentient being whose nature is not definite with regard to pertaining to one of the three vehicles

A sentient being whose nature is not definite with regard to pertaining to one of the three vehicles refers to a person who enters any one of the three paths depending on which teachings he meets with first. He enters the Hearer vehicle if he first meets with the teachings that pertain to the Hinayana vehicle and receives inspiration to become a Hearer Arhat, he enters the Solitary Realizer vehicle if he first meets with Hinayana teachings and receives inspiration to become a Solitary Realizer Arhat, and he enters the Mahayana path if he meets with Mahayana teachings first.

Gyaltsab je says in the *Ornament of the Essence*:

That which is capable of serving as the cause of any of the three vehicles' realizations through the condition [of listening, contemplating, and meditating on one of the three vehicles' Dharma] is called 'non-definite nature'.

c. A sentient being who lacks a nature, i.e. the potential to attain liberation or Buddhahood

A sentient being who lacks a nature can be categorized into different types. Asanga presents these types in his *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras* (Skt.: *Mahayanasutralamkara*, Tib.: *mdo sde rgyan*)

*Some exclusively perform negative actions,
Some have destroyed all their positive qualities,
Some lack the virtue concordant with liberation,
[And there are those who] have inferior positive qualities [but] lack the cause.*

Based on Asanga's quote cited above, Geshe Pema Gyaltsen's commentary *Heart-Jewel that Delights Those of Clear Understanding* (Tib.: *blo gsal dga' bskyed snying gi nor bu*) describes four or five types of sentient beings who lack a nature:

There are many sentient beings who do not possess the above-mentioned nature: (1) sentient beings who only engage in negative actions, (2) some who destroy their white root-virtue with anger, (3) some in whose mental continuum there is no virtue that is concordant with liberation, and (4) some who, despite having inferior virtue in their mental continuum, do not possess the potential that is the seed of the uncontaminated mind in their continuum.

With regard to the first three types [of sentient beings], even though they do have a little root virtue, since it is conjoined with adverse conditions such as afflictions, etc., however much they try to activate the root-virtue it does not increase on account of the presence of these adverse conditions. Hence, they do not possess *Evolving Nature*.

With regard to the fourth type, since they lack the seed of the uncontaminated mind and can never attain liberation [as a result], they do not possess *Naturally Abiding Nature*.

Some scriptures also describe five types of beings who do not possess a nature: four types whose nature is temporarily severed and one type whose nature is permanently severed. [In this case the last line of Asanga's verse from the *Ornament for Mahayana Sutras* that sets forth beings who do not possess a nature is interpreted differently, for it does not describe just one type of sentient being, i.e. those who do not possess naturally abiding nature. Instead,] it describes two types. The last line would then mean: "[And there are those who] have inferior positive qualities [and those who] lack the cause."

Gyaltsab je says in the *Ornament of the Essence*:

That which cannot be nourished is called 'lack of a nature'.

Panchen Sonam Drakpa continues his exposition on Buddha Nature according to the Chittamatra school by citing someone's objection:

- Someone objects to interpreting the above-mentioned quote from Maitreya's **Ornament for the Mahayana Sutra** to mean that there are 'sentient beings who lack a nature', for that would contradict another quote from the **Ornament for the Mahayana Sutra**:

*Even though suchness is in all [sentient beings]
Without distinction, when it becomes pure,
It is Buddhahood. Therefore,
All migratory beings are endowed with its essence.*

The explanation of 'sentient beings who lack a nature' would contradict the latter quote from the **Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras** because that quote indicates that *all* sentient beings are endowed with the *Sugatagarbha* or the Essence of the One Gone to Bliss, i.e. Buddha Nature.

Our response to this objection is that (according to the Chittamatra School Following Scripture) the quote from the **Ornament for the Mahayana Sutra** does not indicate that *all* sentient beings possess Buddha Nature, but that all sentient being's minds are naturally endowed with the essence of clear light. To be naturally endowed with the essence of clear light means that their afflictive and cognitive obstructions are adventitious/extrinsic and do not reside in the nature of their minds.

- Just as the proponents of the Chittamatra School assert that Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is impermanent, some Tibetans assert that the obstructed clear and knowing aspect of the mind (which is also impermanent) constitutes Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature. They assert this because Maitreya says in his **Sublime Continuum** (Skt. *Uttaratantra*, Tib.: *rgyud bla ma*)

*Just as an expert, seeking to get honey
Amidst swarms of bees,
Having seen the honey skillfully separates it
From the swarms of bees.*

*Likewise, the great sages with omniscient sublime vision,
Having seen Buddha Nature analogous to honey,
Irreversibly eliminate its obstructions
Which are analogous to bees.*

*Just as the person who sought to get the honey surrounded
By myriads of bees, removed the honey and procured it as planned,
Likewise, the uncontaminated awareness present in all embodied beings is analogous to honey,
And the Buddhas, who are experts in conquering afflictions analogous to bees, are like the person.*

Also, Nagarjuna says in the **Collection of Hymns** (Tib.: *bstod tshogs*):

*From the goodness of the mind Buddhas will arise.
I bow down to my mind.*

Our response is that this is not the meaning of these quotes, for they have to be explained based upon Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, that is, the permanent sphere of reality (emptiness) of the mind. This is explained below.

The refutation of the Chittamatra School in Arya Vimuktisena's *Illuminating [the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras in] Twenty-Thousand [Verses]*

This section of the **General Meaning** presents Arya Vimuktisena's refutation of the Chittamatra view of Buddha Nature, according to his commentary ***Illuminating [the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras in] Twenty-Thousand [Verses]***.

Panchen Sonam Drakpa starts his presentation of the refutation by citing the following 'consequence': regarding the subject, the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom, it follows that it is not Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature because it does not accord with the meaning of Naturally Abiding Buddha

Nature. It does not accord with the meaning of Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature because there is no sense in which the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom is a '*naturally* abiding' phenomenon. In other words, if the proponents of the Chittamatra School claim that the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom that has not been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, Arya Vimuktisena argues that they have to explain the meaning of the word "Naturally" that is part of the term "*Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature*".

From ***Illuminating [the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras in] Twenty-Thousand [Verses]***:

[The proponents of the Chittamatra School] have to explain what the word "Naturally", in "Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature", means.

- Someone (a proponent of the Chittamatra School) says that the reason of the previous 'consequence' is not established, i.e. it is not correct to say that the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom does *not* accord with the meaning of Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, because the word "naturally" is synonymous with cause.

From ***Illuminating [the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras in] Twenty-Thousand [Verses]***:

Someone says [that the term "natural" is] synonymous with cause.

Here, the argument of one proponent of the Chittamatra School is that the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom that has not been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature because "Naturally" in the term "Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature" is synonymous with cause. It is synonymous with cause because the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom that has not been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma is the cause of Arya realizations. Consequently, Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature refers to 'Buddha Nature that abides as a cause'.

Arya Vimuktisena's response to this assertion is: regarding the subject, Evolving Buddha Nature, it follows that it is also Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature because it is Buddha Nature that abides as a cause.

Here, Arya Vimuktisena argues that the above claim by a proponent of the Chittamatra School leads to the absurdity that Evolving Buddha Nature is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, which cannot be accepted by the proponents of the Chittamatra School, for they hold that Evolving and Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature are contradictory.

From ***Illuminating [the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras in] Twenty-Thousand [Verses]***:

Since [Evolving Buddha Nature] is properly cultivated by conditions, what is the difference in terms of the meaning? [Alternatively,] if [one asserts that the term "natural"] is synonymous with dharmata (i.e. emptiness) there is no fault.

Arya Vimuktisena asserts that "naturally" is synonymous with dharmata or emptiness. Hence, the meaning of the term "Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature" is 'Buddha Nature abiding as emptiness'. His assertion is in accordance with the Madhyamika School since the proponents of the Madhyamika hold that Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature constitutes the emptiness of sentient beings' mental consciousness.

Explanation of our own system, the Middle Way School

This section is further categorized into three subtopics:

1. Describing the nature (meaning/sense) of Buddha Nature
2. Describing the categories of Buddha Nature
3. Describing the signs for having awakened Buddha Nature

Describing the nature (meaning/sense) of Buddha Nature

As mentioned during the presentation of the *Mahayana Path of Preparation*, the 'nature' (Tib.: *ngo bo*) of a phenomenon refers to its meaning, its sense, or possibly its definition. But in the **General Meaning** the main purpose of citing the nature of a phenomenon is to provide students with a general idea of the phenomenon it delineates and not necessarily with a definition that withstands logical analysis. A definition that withstands logical analysis is provided in Panchen Sonam Drakpa's **Decisive Analysis**. In the case of the nature (meaning/sense) of Buddha Nature cited in the **General Meaning**, Panchen Sonam Drakpa negates it as the definition of Buddha Nature in his **Decisive Analysis** because it does not withstand logical analysis. Nonetheless, it is cited here, for it enables students to develop a general understanding of Buddha Nature.

The nature (meaning/sense) of Buddha Nature according to the **General Meaning** is: a sentient being's nature which, when its state is transformed, is suitable to become the Nature Body (Svabhavakaya) or the Form Body (Rupakaya) of a Buddha.

Describing the categories of Buddha Nature

According to the proponents of the Madhyamika, Buddha Nature has two categories:

- a. Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature
- b. Evolving Buddha Nature

Maitreya says in his **Sublime Continuum** (Skt. *Uttaratantra*, Tib.: *rgyud bla ma*):

*Similar to a treasure and the fruit of a tree,
Buddha Nature should be known as [having] two aspects,
That which abides naturally since beginningless time and
That which [becomes] supreme through proper cultivation.*

This verse presents the two types of Buddha Nature by comparing Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature with a hidden treasure and Evolving Buddha Nature with the fruit of a tree.

Before he presents the verse cited above, Maitreya describes Buddha Nature in the fourth chapter of his **Sublime Continuum** by way of nine different examples. The 'hidden treasure' refers to the fifth and the 'fruit of a tree' to the sixth of these examples.

Maitreya says that most sentient beings are not aware of the ultimate reality of their mental consciousness nor that this lack of true/inherent existence facilitates the change and development of their mental consciousness. Therefore, he compares Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature to a precious natural treasure that is hidden beneath the house of a poor man who does not know that it is there. Evolving Buddha Nature refers to (1) sentient beings' mental consciousness itself or to (2) the potential of that mental consciousness to remove obstructions and achieve the realizations of a Buddha. A sentient being's mental consciousness is that which can be developed and transformed into the mind of a Buddha owing to its potential and its lack of true/inherent existence. However, such a transformation can only take place if one listens, contemplates, and meditates on the Dharma. Therefore, Maitreya compares Evolving Buddha Nature to the fruit of a tree, such as a mango, with a seed that has the potential to grow into a big tree provided one creates the necessary conditions for such growth.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is suitable to become the *Dharmakaya* (Truth Body) of a Buddha. Of the two types of Evolving Buddha Nature - (1) sentient beings' mental consciousness and (2) the potential of sentient beings' mental consciousness to remove obstructions and achieve the realizations of a Buddha - it is the potential that is suitable to become the *Rupakaya* (Form Body) of a Buddha.

Maitreya says in his **Sublime Continuum**:

*It is asserted that from these two types of nature,
One attains the three Kayas of a Buddha;
The first Kaya through the first
Through the second the latter two [Kayas].*

The three *Kayas* of a Buddha are (1) the *Dharmakaya* (Truth Body), (2) the *Sambhoghakaya* (Enjoyment Body), and the *Nirmanakaya* (Emanation Body), with the last two being the two categories of the *Rupakaya*.

The verse cited above explains that the first *Kaya*, the *Dharmakaya*, is attained in dependence on the first of the two natures, Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, while the two *Rupakayas* are attained in dependence on the second, Evolving Buddha Nature (i.e. the potential of sentient beings' mental consciousness).

Since Evolving Buddha Nature refers not only to sentient beings' mental consciousness but also to the *potential* of the mental consciousness to remove obstructions and achieve the realizations of a Buddha, Arya Vimuktisena says that the Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature asserted by the proponents of the Chittamatra School is Evolving Buddha Nature and merely *nominal* Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, according to the Madhyamika School.

In other words, as mentioned before, the proponents of the Chittamatra School assert the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom that has been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma to be Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature. The proponents of the Madhyamika School also assert the existence of such a seed, for (like the proponents of the Chittamatra School) they assert it to refer to the potential of sentient beings' mental consciousness to remove obstructions and achieve the realizations of a Buddha, and therefore to be Buddha Nature. However, they do not assert it to be Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature (like the proponents of the Chittamatra School) but Evolving Buddha Nature. Thus, according to the Madhyamika School, the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom that has not been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma is merely *nominal* Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature and not *actual* Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature.

Gyalsab je says in his ***Ornament of the Essence***:

[Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature] is that which is suitable to become a Dharmakaya (Truth Body); it is also the dharmata that is the lack of true existence of sentient beings' minds. The Dharmakaya into which it transforms is the very pure nature that is devoid of all stains. However, it is not taught that the pure nature of sentient beings, having transformed, becomes a Buddha's meditative equipoise.

The existence of the potential [based] on sentient beings' minds that enables separation from stains and generation of Arya realizations is established by reasoning. The [potential] itself is *posited* by the condition of hearing [contemplating, and meditating] and *nourished* by the condition of hearing [contemplating, and meditating]. Therefore, when the transformation of the "nature that is properly cultivated [by conditions]" (i.e. the potential) is completed, it is suitable to become a Rupakaya. [The potential] is that which is posited to be Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature by the proponents of the Chittamatra. Acharya Arya [Vimuktisena] asserts that [according to the Madhyamika School, the potential] is *nominal* Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature and *actual* Evolving Nature.

After citing the verses from the ***Sublime Continuum***, Panchen Sonam Drakpa continues his description of the two categories of Buddha Nature by explaining that Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is the support (Tib.: *rten*) of Evolving Buddha Nature while Evolving Buddha Nature is that which is supported (Tib.: *brten pa*). Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is the support of Evolving Buddha Nature because when Evolving Buddha Nature (a sentient being's mental consciousness) takes to mind Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature (the lack of true/inherent existence of that sentient being's mental consciousness) the Evolving Buddha Nature develops.

In other words, a mental consciousness advances and progresses in dependence upon perceiving its own lack of true/inherent existence (Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature).

Furthermore, Naturally Abiding and Evolving Buddha Nature exist only in the continuums of sentient beings; they do not exist in the continuums of Buddhas. Likewise, Hearer Nature does not exist in the continuums of Hearer Arhats, Solitary Realizer Nature does not exist in the continuums of Solitary Realizer Arhats, and Mahayana nature does not exist in the continuums of Mahayana Arhats, i.e. Buddhas.

Maitreya says in the ***Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras***:

*Natural and evolved,
Support and supported,
They exist and do not exist; their qualities
Should be known to be for the sake of freeing [us].*

The meaning of these four lines is that Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is the support and Evolving Buddha Nature that which is supported. The two types of Buddha Nature exist in the continuums of sentient beings and do not exist in the continuums of Buddhas. And their qualities are that they facilitate the attainment of liberation and enlightenment.

As mentioned before, of the two natures, Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature or (as it is also called) 'Element of the Essence of the One Thus Gone (Skt.: *Sugathagarbha*, Tib.: *khams bde bar gshegs pa'i snying po*) refers to the dharmata of sentient beings' mental consciousness.

Buddha Shakyamuni says in the ***Flower Garland Sutra*** (Skt.: *Avatamsakasutra*, Tib.: *mdo phal chen*)
Pay heed! The Buddha Nature of Bodhisattvas, children of the Victorious Ones, is natural clear light, vast as space, being mainly the sphere of reality. Bodhisattvas who abide in such [nature] arose as past Bhagavan Buddhas, will arise as future Bhagavan Buddhas, have arisen as present Bhagavan Buddhas.

Buddha Shakyamuni says in the ***Middling Perfection of Wisdom Sutra/ [The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in] Twenty Thousand [Verses]*** (Tib.: *nyi khri*):
Subhuti, Bodhisattvas should train in non-attachment and the non-reality of all phenomena because they do not have conceptions and discursive thoughts.

The meaning of this sutric passage is explained in Arya Vimuktisena's ***Illuminating [the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras in] Twenty-Thousand [Verses]***:
Conceptions and discursive thoughts adhere to things and their characteristics. Without those there is no attachment. Non-reality is the suchness of all phenomena. Therefore, since the sphere of reality is the cause of realizing all Arya Dharmas, Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is the support of practice.

Describing the signs for having awakened Buddha Nature

The Buddha says in a sutra:

*Just as one knows [the presence of] fire from [the presence of] smoke and
[The presence] of water from [the presence of] water birds,
Wise Bodhisattvas know [the awakening of]
Buddha Nature from the signs.*

The signs for having awakened Buddha Nature are equivalent to the signs for having awakened Mahayana Nature, even though Buddha Nature and Mahayana Nature are not equivalent. This is explained below.

Like the proponents of the Chittamatra, the proponents of the Madhyamika School assert (1) Hearer Nature, (2) Solitary Realizer Nature, and (3) Mahayana Nature in addition to Buddha Nature. However, these three differ from the Hearer Nature, etc. according to the Chittamatra School.

Hearer Nature

Hearer Nature can be categorized into (1) Naturally Abiding Hearer Nature and (2) Evolving Hearer Nature. Naturally Abiding Hearer Nature refers to the emptiness of the mental consciousness in the continuum of a practitioner who has awakened Hearer Nature but not yet attained the state of a Hearer Arhat. Evolving Hearer Nature refers to (a) the mental consciousness or (b) the potential of that mental consciousness to remove afflictive obstructions and become a Hearer Arhat, in the continuum of a practitioner who has awakened Hearer Nature but not yet attained the state of a Hearer Arhat.

The emptiness of the mental consciousness in the continuum of such a practitioner is both *Naturally Abiding Hearer Nature* and *Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature*, while the mental consciousness itself and its potential are both *Evolving Hearer Nature* and *Evolving Buddha Nature*.

As before, a practitioner who has awakened Hearer Nature constitutes a practitioner who is highly determined to practice the Hearer path and become a Hearer Arhat. Upon receiving Hinayana teachings and inspiration through the example of Hearer practitioners or Hearer Arhats, he experiences great joy and exhibits physical reactions such as his eyes filling with tears and his body hair standing on end.

Solitary Realizer Nature

Solitary Realizer Nature can be categorized into (1) Naturally Abiding Solitary Realizer Nature and (2) evolving Solitary Realizer Nature. Naturally Abiding Solitary Realizer Nature refers to the emptiness of the mental consciousness in the continuum of a practitioner who has awakened Solitary Realizer Nature but not yet attained the state of a Solitary Realizer Arhat. Evolving Solitary Realizer Nature refers to (a) the mental consciousness or (2) the potential of that mental consciousness to remove afflictive obstructions and become a Solitary Realizer Arhat, in the continuum of a practitioner who has awakened Solitary Realizer Nature but not yet attained the state of a Solitary Realizer Arhat.

The emptiness of the mental consciousness in the continuum of such a practitioner is both *Naturally Abiding Solitary Realizer Nature* and *Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature*, while the mental consciousness itself and its potential are both *evolving Solitary Realizer Nature* and *Evolving Buddha Nature*.

As before, a practitioner who has awakened Solitary Realizer Nature constitutes a practitioner who is highly determined to practice the Solitary Realizer path and become a Solitary Realizer Arhat. Upon receiving Hinayana teachings and inspiration through the example of Solitary Realizer practitioners or Solitary Realizer Arhats, he experiences great joy and exhibits physical reactions such as his eyes filling with tears and his body hair standing on end.

Mahayana Nature

Mahayana Nature can be categorized into (1) Naturally Abiding Mahayana Nature and (2) evolving Mahayana Nature. Naturally Abiding Mahayana Nature refers to the emptiness of the mental consciousness in the continuum of a practitioner who has awakened Mahayana Nature but not yet attained the state of a Mahayana Arhat, i.e. a Buddha. Evolving Mahayana Nature refers to (a) the mental consciousness or (b) the potential of that mental consciousness to remove afflictive and cognitive obstructions and become a Buddha, in the continuum of a practitioner who has awakened Mahayana Nature but not yet attained Buddhahood.

The emptiness of the mental consciousness in the continuum of such a practitioner is both *Naturally Abiding Mahayana Nature* and *Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature*, while the mental consciousness itself and its potential are both *evolving Mahayana Nature* and *Evolving Buddha Nature*.

As before, a practitioner who has awakened Mahayana Nature constitutes a person who has cultivated great compassion, who is highly determined to practice the Mahayana path and become a Buddha, who is able to endure any type of hardship for the benefit of others, and who demonstrates intense diligence when engaging in the deeds of a Bodhisattva. The cultivation of great compassion, being highly determined to practice the Mahayana path and become a Buddha, and so forth are explained to be the signs of having awakened both Mahayana Nature and Buddha Nature.

As mentioned before, Maitreya says in his ***Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras***:

*Before [engaging in] training, compassion and
Determination and endurance and
The proper deeds of virtue
Should be known as the signs of [having awakened Mahayana] Nature.*

However, there is a difference between Mahayana Nature and Buddha Nature. Whatever is Mahayana Nature is necessarily Buddha Nature, but whatever is Buddha Nature is *not* necessarily Mahayana Nature. For instance, the emptiness of the mental consciousness in the continuum of a person who has

no interest in the Dharma is Buddha Nature (Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature) but not Mahayana Nature. Likewise, the mental consciousness and its potential (i.e. the potential to remove afflictive and cognitive obstructions and become a Buddha) in the continuum of such a person is Buddha Nature (Evolving Buddha Nature) but not Mahayana nature. Neither of these are Mahayana Nature because they exist in the continuum of a person who has not awakened his Mahayana Nature.

Hence, while in order to be endowed with Mahayana Nature a person must have awakened Mahayana Nature, a person does not have to awaken Buddha Nature in order to be endowed with Buddha Nature. This is because all sentient beings have Buddha Nature.

Gyalsab je says in his ***Ornament of the Essence***:

The potential to eliminate sentient beings' obstructions and generate supramundane paths is labelled "Evolving Nature". It can be categorized into three types of nature, indefinite nature, and so forth. [Those categories] are provisional; it should be understood that ultimately all sentient beings have Buddha Nature.

Like the proponents of the Chittamatra School, the proponents of the Madhyamika also assert three types of being: (1) someone who is endowed with Hearer Nature (Tib.: *nyan thos kyi rigs can*) which refers to a practitioner who has awakened Hearer Nature, (2) someone who is endowed with Solitary Realizer Nature (Tib.: *rang rgyal gyi rigs can*), which refers to a practitioner who has awakened Solitary Realizer Nature, and someone who is endowed with Mahayana Nature (Tib.: *theg chen gyi rigs can*), which refers to a practitioner who has awakened Mahayana Nature.

Furthermore, the proponents of the Madhyamika School also assert the existence of (1) a sentient being who is definite with regard to the nature of one of the three vehicles (Tib.: *theg pa gsum po so sor rigs nges pa'i sems can*) and (2) a sentient being who is not definite with regard to the nature of one of the three vehicles (Tib.: *theg pa gsum gang du yang rigs ma nges pa*) - explaining both types in the same way as the proponents of the Chittamatra. However, (unlike the proponents of the Chittamatra School Following Scripture but like the proponents of the Chittamatra School Following Reasoning) the proponents of the Madhyamika do not accept the existence of a sentient being who lacks a nature, i.e. the potential to attain liberation or Buddhahood (Tib.: *rigs chad kyi sems can*). They do not accept the existence of such a sentient being because, as mentioned above, they assert that all sentient beings have Buddha Nature and will eventually attain Buddhahood.

The assertion that all sentient have Buddha Nature is based on the reasons presented by Maitreya in the ***Sublime Continuum*** (Skt. *Uttaratantra*, Tib.: *rgyud bla ma*):

*Since the perfect Buddha Kaya is all-pervasive,
Since suchness cannot be differentiated, and
Since all sentient beings have Buddha Nature,
They all possess Buddha Essence.*

The meaning of this verse is: all sentient beings possess Buddha Essence, that is, all sentient being will attain the state of a Buddha (1) because the enlightened activity of Buddhas is all-pervasive, (2) because the emptiness of the omniscient mental consciousness of a Buddha and the emptiness of the obstructed mental consciousness of a sentient beings are not of a different nature/entity, and (3) because the minds of all sentient beings lack true/inherent existence and are thus endowed with Buddha Nature.

However, this seems to contradict sutric passages which indicate that there are sentient beings who do not have Buddha Nature. Asanga cites such a sutric passage in his ***Commentary on the Sublime Continuum*** (Tib.: *rgyu bla thogs 'grel*) and explains that this sutra cannot be taken literally and requires interpretation:

[From the sutra:] "Then he said that those who delight in vicious actions (Tib.: *log sred can*) do not thoroughly pass beyond sorrow."

What is explained here is that the cause of beings who delight in vicious actions is their having a hostile attitude towards Mahayana Dharma. In order to reverse such a hostile attitude [the Buddha] taught [this sutra] with the intent to indicate a different time. Since all sentient beings possess

naturally pure Buddha Nature, it is not fitting that they never become pure. For that reason, having realized that all sentient beings without distinction are suitable to become pure, [the Buddha] says:

Although beginningless, it possesses an end,
The bearer of the naturally pure, permanent attribute:
[Because its] outside is concealed by a cover since beginningless time, it is unseen,
Like a concealed golden statue.

In general, it is explained that a hostile attitude towards Mahayana Dharma causes those delighting in vicious actions to not attain enlightenment for a long time. In order to reverse such an attitude the Buddha literally says that beings who delight in vicious actions will not thoroughly pass beyond sorrow, i.e. attain the enlightened state of a Buddha. However, the Buddha says that they will not attain the enlightened state of a Buddha with the intent to indicate 'a different time' (Tib.: *dus gzhan*). He intends to indicate 'a different time', for his intended meaning is that sentient beings who delight in vicious actions will not attain enlightenment *for a long time*. Therefore, this sutric passage is considered to be a teaching that requires interpretation. It is a teaching that requires interpretation because it is endowed with the three aspects of a teaching that cannot be taken literally. The three aspects are:

- i. Intended meaning
- ii. Purpose [of the teaching]
- iii. Damage to the explicit [literal meaning of the sutric passage]

As mentioned above, the intended meaning (Tib.: *dgongs gzhi*) of the sutric passage is that those who feel hostile towards Mahayana Dharma will not attain Buddhahood for *a long time*. The purpose (Tib.: *dgos pa*) is to reverse the hostile attitude towards Mahayana Dharma, and the damage to the explicit [literal meaning of the sutric passage] (Tib.: *dnagos la gnod byed*) is the fact that all sentient beings are the focus of the enlightened activity of the Buddhas and that they all possess Buddha Nature.

Gyaltsab je says in his ***Ornament of the Essence***:

Naturally abiding nature, which was explained before, serves as the support of the realizations of the different vehicles. It is suitable to be transformed into the support of the realization of any vehicle. Therefore, one applies to it the convention of 'the provisional three natures' or 'the indefinite nature'. However, a complete lack of Buddha Nature is not asserted because [Asanga] cites a sutra in [his] commentary on the ***Sublime Continuum*** and establishes that [the sutra's] explanation of the lack of Buddha Nature has another thought behind it [i.e. needs to be interpreted].

[From Asanga's ***Commentary on the Sublime Continuum***]:

"Then he said that those who delight in vicious actions do not thoroughly pass beyond sorrow." What is explained here is that the cause of beings who delight in vicious actions is their having a hostile attitude towards Mahayana Dharma. In order to reverse such a hostile attitude [the Buddha] taught [this sutra] with the intent to indicate a different time. Since all sentient beings possess naturally pure Buddha Nature, it is not fitting that they should never become pure. For that reason, having realized that all sentient beings without distinction are suitable to become pure, [the Buddha] says:

Although beginningless, it possesses an end,
The bearer of the naturally pure, permanent attribute:
[Because its] outside is concealed by a cover since beginningless time, it is unseen,
Like a concealed golden statue.

The meaning of this is that the Buddha's description of the lack of Buddha Nature has (1) an intended meaning, (2) a purpose, and (3) damage to the explicit [literal meaning]

The intended meaning is that for a long time - innumerable eons - the path of liberation will not be generated in the continuum [of a person who delights in vicious actions].

The purpose is to reverse the hostile attitude towards Mahayana Dharma, for a hostile attitude towards Mahayana Dharma causes those delighting in vicious actions to not attain enlightenment for long time.

The damage to the explicit [literal meaning of the sutra] is that it would be unreasonable for some sentient beings not to purify their stains because (1) all sentient beings have naturally pure Buddha Nature and (2) all sentient beings are affected by the Buddhas' enlightened activity. This is because being born as a fortunate being in a state of high rebirth is [the result of] the Buddhas' enlightened activity and there is no sentient being who has not attained a high rebirth [at least] once.

However, since all sentient beings are the focus of the enlightened activity of the Buddhas and the number of Buddhas who have come to this world equals the amount of dust particles in [the bed of] the river Ganges, what is the reason that some sentient beings, despite being endowed with Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, have not yet attained Nirvana?

The reason is that those sentient beings are affected by the four hindrances to Buddha Nature (Tib.: *rigs kyī nyes dmigs bzhi*).

The four hindrances to Buddha Nature are:

1. having very strong afflictions
2. being influenced by bad companions
3. being deprived of the necessities of life, etc.
4. being under the control of other sentient beings

Arya Vimuktisena says in his *Illuminating the [Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in] Twenty-Thousand [Verses]* (Skt. *Abhisamayalamkaravṛtti*, Tib.: *nyi khri snang ba*):

Someone asks, if there is that type of naturally pure Buddha Nature, why have living beings who are endowed with Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature not yet gone beyond sorrow, even though Buddhas numerous as dust particles of the river Ganges, who have gone beyond sorrow, abide in Samsara that is beginningless? [The reason is] that they possess the four hindrances. The four hindrances are afflictions, bad companions, deprivation, and being under the control of others.

Gyalsab je says in his *Ornament of the Essence*:

If all sentient beings have Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, why is it that there are still limitless living beings who have not yet gone beyond sorrow, even though limitless Buddhas have come? It is because of possessing the four hindrances to Buddha Nature: having very strong afflictions, being influenced by bad companions, being deprived of the necessities of life, etc., and being under the control of other sentient beings.

This completes a general presentation of naturally abiding and Evolving Buddha Nature according to Panchen Sonam Drakpa's *General Meaning*.

Two Types of Buddha Nature - Explanations & Debates – Panchen Sonam Drakpa's *Decisive Analysis*

Next follows a presentation of the explanations and debates related to the two types of Buddha Nature that are set forth in Panchen Sonam Drakpa's *Decisive Analysis*:

Elaborating on the verses of the *Ornament* that present the thirteen types of Buddha Nature:

The six qualities of realization...

and so forth, Panchen Sonam Drakpa sets forth (1) a syllogism and (2) analysis.

The syllogism

Regarding the subject, the emptinesses of the thirteen practice-awarenesses of a Bodhisattva, they are Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of Mahayana practice-awarenesses (1) because they are the emptinesses of Bodhisattva awarenesses that are their objects of support and (2) because they are the support of Mahayana practice-awarenesses.

Analysis

The section of the analysis consists of:

1. Explaining Buddha Nature according to the Chittamatra system
2. Explaining Buddha Nature according to the Madhyamika system

Explaining Buddha Nature according to the Chittamatra system

- Someone says that Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature and Evolving Buddha Nature are not contradictory because the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of sentient beings is both Naturally Abiding and Evolving Buddha Nature.

Our response is that this is not correct because Gyaltsab je explains in his ***Ornament of the Essence*** that the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of sentient beings whose seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom has not been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature while the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of sentient beings whose seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom has been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma is Evolving Buddha Nature. Therefore, the two types of Buddha Nature are contradictory.

- With regard to the last response, someone says: "it follows that from the Mahayana path of accumulation onwards there is no Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature because of your above response. If you accept (that from the Mahayana path of accumulation onwards there is no Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature), it follows that from the Mahayana path of accumulation onwards there is no Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness because you accept (that from the Mahayana path of accumulation onwards there is no Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature). If you accept (that from the Mahayana path of accumulation onwards there is no Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness), it follows that the proponents of the Madhyamika School do not assert Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness because the proponents of the Chittamatra School do not assert Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness."

Our response is that there is no pervasion, i.e. if the proponents of the Chittamatra School do not assert Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness, this does not mean that the proponents of the Madhyamika School do not assert Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness.

If you were to accept that the proponents of the Chittamatra School assert Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness, it would (absurdly) follow that according to the Chittamatra School, the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation would be Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness. The seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation would be Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness (1) because such a seed exists and (2) because (according to the Chittamatra School) the emptiness of the Mahayana path of preparation is not Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness. (According to the Chittamatra School) the emptiness of the Mahayana path of preparation is not Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness because (according to the Chittamatra School) Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is impermanent.

If you were to accept that the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness, it would follow that the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness. If you were to accept that the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of preparation is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness, it would follow that the Mahayana

path of preparation itself is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness. If you were to accept that the Mahayana path of preparation itself is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness, it would follow that the Mahayana path of preparation is its own support. This does not make any sense!

Furthermore, (according to the Chittamatra School) Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature and Evolving Buddha Nature are contradictory because Evolving Buddha Nature is not Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature. Evolving Buddha Nature is not Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature because the following 'consequence' from Arya Vimuktisena's ***Illuminating the [Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in] Twenty-Thousand [Verses]*** is a 'consequence' the basic premise of which the proponents of the Chittamatra do not accept. The 'consequence' is: regarding the subject, Evolving Buddha Nature, it is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, because it is the cause of attaining Arya realizations. (The basic premise of this consequence is: Evolving Buddha Nature is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature)

- Someone says that there is no fault in asserting that Naturally Abiding and Evolving Buddha Nature are not contradictory because, even though proponents of the Chittamatra School accept that Evolving Buddha Nature in the continuum of practitioners on the path is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, proponents of the Chittamatra School maintain that whatever is Evolving Buddha Nature is not necessarily Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature.

Our response is that you have to (absurdly) assert that according to the proponents of the Chittamatra School, whatever is Evolving Buddha Nature is necessarily Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature because you claim that according to the proponents of the Chittamatra School, evolving Buddha in the continuum of practitioners on the path is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature.

Furthermore, you have to (absurdly) assert that according to the proponents of the Chittamatra School, whatever is Evolving Buddha Nature is necessarily Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, (1) because (you assert that) in general, Evolving Buddha Nature and Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature are not contradictory, and (2) because Bodhisattvas on the tenth ground (bhumi) have Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature in their continuums.

Therefore (according to the Chittamatra School) the definition of Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is: (1) nature that is suitable to become the Kaya of a Buddha and (2) has not been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma.

The definition of Evolving Buddha Nature is: (1) nature that is suitable to become the Kaya of a Buddha and (2) has been nourished by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma.

Explaining Buddha Nature according to the Madhyamika system:

- Someone says that the definition of Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is: "emptiness of a mind that has stains."

This is not correct because the emptiness of the 'uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' (Tib.: *rgyun mtha' bar chad med lam*) is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature but not emptiness of a mind that has stains.

Please note that 'the path at the end of the continuum' refers to the meditative equipoise that is eliminating the subtlest cognitive obstructions in the continuum of a tenth ground Bodhisattva. A moment later, the Bodhisattva simultaneously attains the cessation of the subtlest cognitive obstructions and becomes a Buddha.

Therefore, the emptiness of the 'uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' is not emptiness of a mind that has stains, because the 'uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' does not have stains. 'The uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' does not have stains because the Bodhisattva on 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' does not have cognitive obstructions in his continuum. He does not have cognitive obstructions in his continuum because he abides in the direct antidote to cognitive obstructions. The Bodhisattva on 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the

continuum' abides in the direct antidote to cognitive obstructions because he abides in 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' which is the direct antidote to cognitive obstructions. 'The uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' is the direct antidote to cognitive obstructions because it is the direct antidote to the subtlest cognitive obstructions.

- Someone says that the emptiness of 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' is the emptiness of an awareness that is its (that uninterrupted path's) object of support and that has stains, because 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' has stains. 'The uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' has stains because it is not separated from adventitious stains. 'The uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' is not separated from adventitious stains because its emptiness is not emptiness that is separated from adventitious stains. Its emptiness is not emptiness that is separated from adventitious stains because it is said that whoever is a person who actualizes emptiness that is separated from adventitious stains is necessarily a person who actualizes the *Dharmakaya* (Truth Body) of a Buddha.

Our response is that there is no pervasion, i.e. even though whoever is a person who actualizes emptiness that is separated from adventitious stains is necessarily a person who actualizes the *Dharmakaya* of a Buddha, this does not mean that the emptiness of 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' is not emptiness that is separated from adventitious stains.

If you assert that there is a pervasion then it (absurdly) follows that the emptiness of 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' is not itself (i.e. that the emptiness of 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' is not the emptiness of 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum'), because whoever is a person who actualizes the emptiness of 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' is necessarily a person who actualizes the *Dharmakaya* of a Buddha. Whoever is a person who actualizes the emptiness of 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' is necessarily a person who actualizes the *Dharmakaya* of a Buddha, because whoever is a person who actualizes emptiness is necessarily a person who actualizes the *Dharmakaya* of a Buddha.

Please note that a person who *actualizes* emptiness refers to a person who is able to spontaneously and effortlessly work for the benefit of sentient beings *while* being absorbed in the meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness. Since whoever is able to spontaneously and effortlessly work for the benefit of sentient beings while being absorbed in the meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness is necessarily a Buddha, whoever actualizes emptiness is necessarily a Buddha. Therefore, whoever actualizes the emptiness of 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum', the emptiness of the Mahayana path of preparation, the emptiness of a vase, etc. is necessarily a Buddha.

- Someone says that Bodhisattvas on 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' have attained the separation that is separated from adventitious stains, because they are separated from adventitious stains.

Our response is that there is no pervasion, i.e. even though Bodhisattvas have separated from adventitious stains, this does not mean that they attained the separation that is separated from adventitious stains.

- Someone asserts that Bodhisattvas on 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' have attained the separation that is separated from adventitious stains, because the *truth of cessation* of Bodhisattvas on 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' is the separation that is separated from adventitious stains. The *truth of cessation* of Bodhisattvas on 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' is the separation that is separated from adventitious stains (1) because it is separated from adventitious stains and (2) because it is a separation.

Our response is that there is no pervasion, i.e. even though the *truth of cessation* of Bodhisattvas on 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' is (1) separated from adventitious stains and (2) a separation, this does not mean that it is a separation that is separated from adventitious stains.

There is no pervasion because a separation that is separated from adventitious stains refers to the *truth of cessation* of a Buddha.

- Someone asserts that the definition of Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is: "emptiness of the mind that has not eliminated stains."

This definition is not correct because neither (1) the emptiness of the mental factor of feeling in the continuum of a Bodhisattva nor (2) the emptiness of the mind in the continuum of ordinary Devadatta satisfy the definition (even though they are both Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature).

The emptiness of the mental factor of feeling in the continuum of a Bodhisattva does not satisfy the definition because the mental factor of feeling in the continuum of a Bodhisattva is not a mind. It is not a mind because it is a mental factor.

The emptiness of the mind in the continuum of ordinary Devadatta is also not the emptiness of the mind that has not eliminated stains because the emptiness of the mind in the continuum of ordinary Devadatta is not the emptiness of the mind. The emptiness of the mind in the continuum of ordinary Devadatta is not the emptiness of the mind because the emptiness of Devadatta is not the emptiness of the person.

- Someone says that the definition of Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of Mahayana practice-awareness is: "that which is (1) a sphere of reality (i.e. emptiness) and (2) serves as the support-basis of the Mahayana practice-awareness."

This definition is not correct because the emptiness of the mind of a Buddha satisfies the definition but is not Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature. The emptiness of the mind of a Buddha satisfies the definition because (1) it is a sphere of reality and (2) serves as the support-basis of the Mahayana practice-awareness. The emptiness of the mind of a Buddha serves as the 'support-basis' (Tib.: *theg chen sgrub pa'i rten gzhi byed pa*) of the Mahayana practice-awareness because it is the focal object of the Mahayana practice-awareness.

- Someone else says that the definition of Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of Mahayana practice-awareness is: "that which is (1) the emptiness of the Bodhisattva mind and (2) serves as the Mahayana practice-awareness."

This definition is not correct because the emptiness of the mental factor of feeling in the continuum of a Bodhisattva, etc. is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature but does not satisfy the definition.

- Someone says that the definition of Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is: "that which is (1) the emptiness of a consciousness that is its object of support and has not eliminated stains, and which (2), when its state is transformed, is suitable to become the *Svabhavikakaya* (Nature Body) of a Buddha."

This definition is not correct because the emptiness of the mind of a Bodhisattva on 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature but does not satisfy the definition. The emptiness of the mind of a Bodhisattva on 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' does not satisfy the definition, because, when its state is transformed, it is not suitable to become the *Svabhavikakaya* (Nature Body) of a Buddha. When its state is transformed, it is not suitable to become the *Svabhavikakaya* (Nature Body) of a Buddha, because when its state is transformed, it *has become* the *Svabhavikakaya* (Nature Body) of a Buddha.

According to our own system, the definition of Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is: that which is (1) the emptiness of a consciousness that is its object of support and has not eliminated stains, and which (2) is suitable to become the *Svabhavikakaya* (Nature Body) of a Buddha.

The definition of Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of the Mahayana practice-

awareness is: that which is (1) the emptiness of the consciousness of a Bodhisattva that is its object of support and (2) serves as the support-basis of the Mahayana practice-awareness.

The definition of Evolving Buddha Nature is: that which is (1) Buddha Nature and (2) suitable to become a conditioned (i.e. impermanent) *Kaya* of a Buddha.

- Someone objects to the definition of Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature given by our own system by arguing: "regarding the subject, the emptiness of the awareness that grasps at true/inherent existence, it follows that it is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature because it satisfies the definition. The emptiness of the awareness that grasps at true/inherent existence satisfies the definition because the emptiness of the mind that has stains satisfies the definition."

Our response is that there is no pervasion, i.e. even though the emptiness of the mind that has stains satisfies the definition, this does not mean that the emptiness of the awareness that grasps at true/inherent existence satisfies the definition.

If you assert that the awareness that grasps at true/inherent existence satisfies the definition then it (absurdly) follows that the awareness that grasps at true/inherent existence is suitable to become the *Jnanakaya* (Wisdom Body) of a Buddha. The awareness that grasps at true/inherent existence is suitable to become the *Jnanakaya* (Wisdom Body) of a Buddha, because the mind that has stains is suitable to become the *Jnanakaya* (Wisdom Body) of a Buddha. You assert the pervasion.

- With regard to the definition of Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature posited by our own system, someone presents the following debate: "regarding the subject, the emptiness of the eye consciousness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation, it follows that it is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature because it satisfies the definition of Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature. If you accept (that the emptiness of the eye consciousness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature), it follows that the eye consciousness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation is Evolving Buddha Nature, because the emptiness of the eye consciousness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature."

If you accept (that the eye consciousness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation is Evolving Buddha Nature) it follows that the eye consciousness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation is suitable to become the *Jnanakaya* (Wisdom Body) of a Buddha, because the eye consciousness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation is Evolving Buddha Nature. It is not correct to accept (that the eye consciousness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation is suitable to become the *Jnanakaya* of a Buddha), because whatever is a *Jnanakaya* is necessarily a mental consciousness, whereas the eye consciousness in the continuum of a Buddha is not a mental consciousness.

Furthermore, the emptiness of the eye consciousness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, because it is suitable to become the *Nature Body of Natural Purity* of a Buddha. The emptiness of the eye consciousness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation is suitable to become the *Nature Body of Natural Purity* of a Buddha because the emptiness of the eye consciousness of a Buddha is a *Nature Body of Natural Purity*. The emptiness of the eye consciousness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation is a *Nature Body of Natural Purity* because it is a *Nature Body*."

Our response is that this needs to be analyzed.

- Someone says that the two, (1) Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of the Mahayana practice-awareness and (2) Naturally Abiding Mahayana Nature are equivalent.

This is not correct because the emptiness of the mental consciousness in the continuum of a person who has not yet entered a path but who has just awakened Mahayana Nature is (2) Naturally Abiding Mahayana Nature but not (1) Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature that is the support of the Mahayana

practice-awareness. The emptiness of the mental consciousness in the continuum of a person who has not yet entered a path but who has just awakened Mahayana Nature is (2) Naturally Abiding Mahayana Nature because someone who has not yet entered a path but who has just awakened Mahayana Nature has Mahayana Nature in his continuum. If you were to say that the reason is not established (i.e. that a person who has not yet entered a path but who has just awakened Mahayana Nature does not have Mahayana Nature in his continuum): regarding the subject, a person who has not yet entered a path but who has just awakened Mahayana Nature, it follows that he has Mahayana Nature in his continuum because he is someone who has just awakened his Mahayana Nature.

- Concerning the previous assertion, someone argues: "regarding the subject, Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation who will definitely enter the Hearer path, it follows that it is Naturally Abiding Mahayana Nature because the emptiness of the mental consciousness in the continuum of a person who has not yet entered a path but who has just awakened Mahayana Nature is Naturally Abiding Mahayana Nature. If you accept, I respond by saying: regarding the subject, Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation who will definitely enter the Hearer path, it follows that it is *not* Naturally Abiding Mahayana Nature, because it is Hearer Nature. Regarding the subject, Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature in the continuum of a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation who will definitely enter the Hearer path, it follows that it is Hearer Nature, because that Bodhisattva has Hearer Nature in his continuum. If you say that the reason is not established (i.e. that a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation who will definitely enter the Hearer path does not have Hearer Nature in their continuums), I debate: regarding the subject, a Bodhisattva on the path of accumulation who will definitely enter the Hearer path, it follows that he has Hearer Nature in his continuum, because he is 'someone who is endowed with Hearer Nature' (Tib.: *nyan thos kyi rigs can*)."

Our response to the last reason is that there is no pervasion (i.e. even though a person is 'someone who is endowed with Hearer Nature', this does not mean that he has Hearer Nature in his continuum.)

In case you assert that whoever is 'someone who is endowed with Hearer Nature' necessarily has Hearer Nature in his continuum, I present the following debate: regarding the subject, 'someone who is definite with regard to Hearer Nature' (Tib.: *nyan thos kyi rigs nges*) but who has not yet cultivated great compassion, it follows that he has Hearer Nature in his continuum, because he is 'someone who is definite with regard to Hearer Nature'. You assert the pervasion.

If you accept (that 'someone who is definite with regard to Hearer Nature' but who has not yet cultivated great compassion has Hearer Nature in his continuum): regarding the subject, 'someone who is definite with regard to Hearer Nature' but who has not yet cultivated great compassion, it follows that he has awakened Mahayana Nature, because you accept (that 'someone who is definite with regard to Hearer Nature' but who has not yet cultivated great compassion has Hearer Nature in his continuum). If you accept (that 'someone who is definite with regard to Hearer Nature' but who has not yet cultivated great compassion has awakened Mahayana Nature): regarding the subject, 'someone who is definite with regard to Hearer Nature' but who has not yet cultivated great compassion, it follows that he has already attained great compassion, because you accept (that 'someone who is definite with regard to Hearer Nature' but who has not yet cultivated great compassion has awakened Mahayana Nature). There is a pervasion (i.e. whoever has awakened Mahayana Nature has necessarily attained great compassion) because Maitreya says in his **Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras** (Skt.: **Mahayanasutralamkara**, Tib.: **mdo sde rgyan**):

*Before [engaging in] training, compassion and
Determination and endurance and
The proper deeds of virtue
Should be known as the signs of [having awakened Mahayana-]nature.*

- [The Sakya scholar] Rongtikpa says: "the clear and knowing aspect of the mind that possesses stains is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, because it is the substantial cause of the *Jnanakaya* of a Buddha and because Maitreya says in the **Sublime Continuum** during the brief explanation:

*Likewise, the great sages with omniscient sublime vision,
Having seen Buddha Nature analogous to honey,*

while Maitreya says in the **Sublime Continuum** during the extensive explanation:

*Likewise, the uncontaminated awareness present in all embodied beings is analogous to honey,
And the Buddhas, who are experts in conquering afflictions analogous to bees, are like the person.*

Furthermore, regarding the subject, the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom that is asserted by the proponents of the Chittamatra, it is not Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, because not all sentient beings possess such a seed. Not all sentient beings possess the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom because it is possible that there are sentient beings who do not have such a seed."

Our response to Rongtikpa's assertion is: this is not correct because it contradicts the sutra, the **Sublime Continuum**, the three commentaries, and his own assertions.

The three commentaries here are:

- i. Arya Vimuktisena's **Illuminating the [Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in] Twenty-Thousand [Verses]** (Skt. *Abhisamayalamkaravrtti*, Tib.: *nyi khri snang ba*)
- ii. Haribhadra's **Illuminating the Ornament** (Skt.: *Abhisamayalankarakaprajna* = *paramitavyakhya*, Tib.: *rgyan snang*)
- iii. Haribhadra's **Commentary Clarifying the Meaning** (Skt.: *Sphuṭārtha*, Tib.: *'grel pa don gsal*)

Rongtikpa's assertion contradicts the sutra because Buddha Shakyamuni says in the **Flower Garland Sutra** (Skt.: *Avatamsakasutra*, Tib.: *mdo phal chen*)

Pay heed! The Buddha Nature of Bodhisattvas, children of the Victorious Ones, is natural clear light, vast as space, being mainly the sphere of reality. Bodhisattvas who abide in such [nature] arose as past Bhagavan Buddhas, will arise as future Bhagavan Buddhas, have arisen as present Bhagavan Buddhas.

Rongtikpa's assertion contradicts the **Sublime Continuum** (Skt. *Uttaratantra*, Tib.: *rgyud bla ma*) because Maitreya says in that text:

*It is asserted that from these two types of nature,
One attains the three Kayas of a Buddha;
The first Kaya through the first
Through the second the latter two [Kayas].*

Here, Maitreya explains that the first Kaya, the Dharmakaya - or more precisely - the Nature Body of Natural Purity, is attained in dependence on Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature. Therefore, Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is suitable to become the Nature Body of Natural Purity of a Buddha. However, according to Rongtikpa's assertion, Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is not suitable to become the Nature Body of Natural Purity because the clear and knowing aspect of a Buddha's mind is not the Nature Body of Natural Purity of a Buddha.

Rongtikpa's assertion contradicts the three commentaries because Arya Vimuktisena says in his **Illuminating the [Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in] Twenty-Thousand [Verses]**:

[Alternatively,] if [one asserts that the term "natural"] is synonymous with dharmata (i.e. emptiness) there is no fault.

Haribhadra says in his **Illuminating the Ornament**:

The term "nature" is applied to the sphere of reality on account of [it] being posited as the entity of the cause.

And Haribhadra says in his **Commentary Clarifying the Meaning**:

Nature is indicated only with regard to the entity of the sphere of reality.

Therefore, Rongtikpa's assertion contradicts the three commentaries because the three commentaries indicate that whatever is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature is necessarily the sphere of reality (i.e. emptiness) and because the sphere of reality and the mind are contradictory. The sphere of reality and

the mind are contradictory because whatever is emptiness is necessarily a non-affirming negation. Whatever is emptiness is necessarily a non-affirming negation because Chandrakirti says in his **Clear Words** (Skt.: **Prasannapada**, Tib.: **tshig gsal**):

Because it is accepted that it is stated as a non-affirming negation

Bhavaviveka says in his **Lamp of Wisdom** (Skt.: **Prajnadipa**, Tib.: **shes rab sgron ma**)

"To be nothing at all" is a phrase that provides the final meaning of a non-affirming negation

Also, Rongtikpa's assertion contradicts his other assertions because he holds that all sentient beings will attain Buddhahood. Therefore, the assertion that all sentient beings will attain Buddhahood contradicts his former assertion that there are sentient beings who do not possess the seed of uncontaminated exalted wisdom.

Furthermore, regarding the subject, 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum', it follows that it is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, because it is the substantial cause of the *Jnanakaya* of a Buddha.

You assert the pervasion.

However, it is not correct to accept (that 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' is Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature), because 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' does not exist in the continuum of all sentient beings. 'The uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum' does not exist in the continuum of all sentient beings, because there are sentient beings who are not endowed with 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum'.

Also, regarding the subject, 'the uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum', it follows that it is not Naturally Abiding Buddha Nature, because it is Evolving Buddha Nature.

This concludes a presentation of Buddha Nature in general and the two types of Buddha Nature (Naturally Abiding and Evolving) in particular in accordance with the **General Meaning** and **Decisive Analysis** by Panchen Sonam Drakpa.